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Professor Lyn Gilbert, a leading infectious disease expert in charge of Australia's response to the Ebola virus, reacts after speaking at a lecture at Sydney University on 30 October. Australia's newly appointed Ebola "tsar" challenged the government's blanket ban on visas from West African nations affected by the deadly virus, saying the controversial measure was not supported by medical evidence. The government touted the ban as a necessary precaution, but Professor Gilbert, who is the top government medical official to speak out against the ban, said there was no evidence to back its claim, which was blasted by leaders in Liberia and Sierra Leone as draconian and discriminatory.

From the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Tobacco, alcohol and drug use: the good and the bad news

The latest information on drug use in Australia released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows rates of smoking in Australia are steadily declining. Fewer Australians are smoking on a daily basis, and those who do smoke are smoking less. Findings from the AIHW 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey show that the daily smoking rate has halved since 1991.

Even more encouraging is the news that young people are delaying taking up smoking. In 2013, 95% of 12–17-year-olds had never smoked and 77% of 18–24-year-olds had never smoked.

Similarly, many young people are delaying their first drink. The average age at which young people first tried alcohol rose from 14.4 to 15.7 years between 1998 and 2013.

Positive trends in alcohol use were also seen in the overall population. In 2013, fewer people drank alcohol in quantities that exceeded lifetime risk, meaning that the risk of alcohol-related harm, such as alcohol-related disease or injury, over the lifespan was greatly reduced.

Although findings on alcohol and tobacco use were positive, the results on illicit drug use were mixed. There has been a steady



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doi: 10.5694/mja14.01372

decline in the use of ecstasy, heroin and GHB (γ -hydroxybutyrate), but more people are misusing pharmaceuticals.

Notably, there was a major shift in the use of methamphetamine and amphetamines. While use of the powdered form of the drugs dropped, the use of ice, or "crystal meth", replaced powder as the most common form used between 2010 and 2013.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey is conducted by the AIHW every 2–3 years. The 2013 survey collected data from nearly 24 000 people across Australia from 31 July to 1 December 2013. □

News

3D printers could make customised medicines on demand

A 3D printer that can make customised medicines on demand is under development in the United Kingdom, *Medical News Today* reports. Researchers from the University of Central Lancashire say they think hospitals and pharmaceutical firms will take up the technology inside 5 years, and the public within 10 years. Meanwhile, researchers in Florida have developed a method of printing facial prostheses for those who have lost an eye to cancer or congenital deformities. And another team in New York has come up with a way to print artificial ears for those who lose them in accidents or from cancer.

Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus update

Two cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), the first cases to occur in Qatar in 2014, have been reported to the **World Health Organization**. A 71-year-old man who owns a camel barn is in critical condition after drinking raw camel milk. A 43-year-old man, who was known to have frequented a camel barn in the fortnight before developing symptoms, is in a stable condition. Globally, the WHO has received notification of 885 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 319 related deaths. People with diabetes, renal failure or chronic lung disease and those who are immunocompromised are considered to be at high risk of severe disease and should avoid close contact with animals, particularly camels.



Frozen meals outdo fast food on nutritional value

A new study shows that Americans who eat frozen meals have higher daily intakes of potassium, fibre, calcium and protein and consume 253 fewer calories per day than those who eat fast food, *Medical News Today* reports. The results of the study, using data from participants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2003–2010), were published in the *Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*. Frozen meal eaters also consumed 2.6 grams less of saturated fat per day, according to the researchers. The results are a follow-up to data which indicated that people who ate frozen meals had better diet quality and came closer to meeting recommendations for fruits, vegetables, whole grains and total protein foods than those who ate fast food.



WHO updates personal protection guidelines

The **World Health Organization** has updated its personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines in the wake of the growing Ebola crisis in West Africa. Edward Kelley, the WHO director for service delivery and safety said: "Paramount to the guidelines' effectiveness is the inclusion of mandatory training on the putting on, taking off and decontaminating of PPE, followed by mentoring for all users before engaging in any clinical care". The new guidelines emphasise the importance of protecting the mouth, nose and eyes from contaminated droplets and fluids. "A fundamental principle guiding the selection of different types of PPE was the effort to strike a balance between the best possible protection against infection while allowing health workers to provide the best possible care to patients with maximum ease, dexterity, comfort and minimal heat-associated stress", the review said.



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Urgency and increased certainty in latest IPCC report

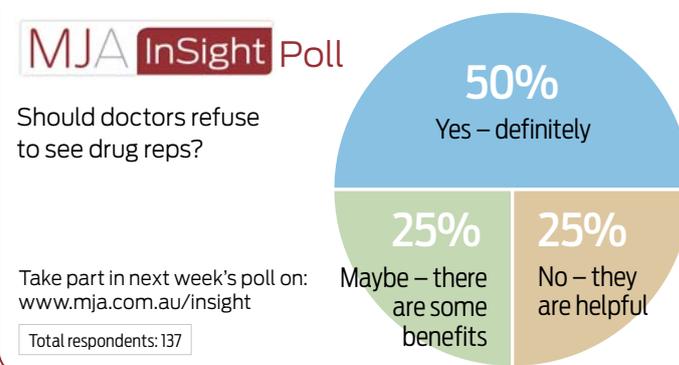
On 1 November 2014, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a summary of its last three reports and the final part of its Fifth Assessment Report. This concluded "continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems".

It also concluded "limiting climate change would require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which, together with adaptation, can limit climate change risks" and warned that the planet is unequivocally warming, that burning fossil fuels is significantly increasing greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change are already being felt.

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Cate Swannell doi: 10.5694/mja14.n1117